

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

February 23, 2021

## General Information about COVID-19

### What is novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses cause respiratory illness in humans, ranging from mild common colds to severe pneumonias. Others cause illness in animals only.

Novel coronaviruses are new strains of the virus that have not been previously identified in humans. COVID-19 is the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, a new virus that was first recognized in December 2019.

### What are COVID-19 variants?

COVID-19 viruses that have changed or mutated are called variants. Like most viruses, COVID-19 mutates as it reproduces inside the cells of an infected person.

Recently, new variant COVID-19 strains were identified in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil. These new strains are of concern because they appear to spread more easily than other strains and Alberta is closely monitoring for variant strains of COVID-19.

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever
- A new cough or a chronic cough that is worsening
- New or worsening shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Runny nose

Additional Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- Stuffy nose
- Painful swallowing
- Headache
- Chills
- Muscle or joint aches
- Feeling unwell in general, or new fatigue or severe exhaustion
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite)
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Conjunctivitis, commonly known as pink eye

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

#### **How serious is COVID-19?**

Most people (about 80%) recover from this disease without needing special treatment. However, it can cause serious illness. Those who are older, and those with other medical problems are more likely to develop serious illness, which can include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Pneumonia
- Death in severe cases.

While we are still learning about COVID-19, serious illness appears to develop more often in people who are older or have pre-existing conditions, such as:

- High blood pressure
- Heart and/or lung disease
- Cancer
- Diabetes

#### **How is COVID-19 spread from person-to-person?**

COVID-19 is transmitted through tiny droplets of liquid produced by people who have the virus, and then spread from person-to-person by:

- coughing, sneezing, talking, laughing, and singing
- touching objects or surfaces the virus has landed on and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth (bath towels, kitchen utensils, door knobs, etc.)

People who have COVID-19 can spread it to others before they start to feel sick.

COVID-19 is not widely spread by being airborne, which means it doesn't stay in the air long and won't go very far. But if you are too close to someone with COVID-19 you can get sick by breathing in air that contains droplets with the virus. More research into airborne transmission is ongoing.

#### **How can I protect myself and my family from COVID-19?**

Make sure you practice proper physical distancing. Wear a mask in public when it is difficult to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres at all times. Masks should be used in addition to other public health measures to limit spread.

On December 8, the Government of Alberta made masking mandatory for all indoor public spaces, workplaces and places of worship. All Albertans should follow public health measures as determined by the Government of Alberta.

You and your family should also follow the same practices recommended for protecting against all respiratory illnesses:

- Wash your hands using an alcohol-based rub or soap and warm water for at least twenty seconds.

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

- Avoid touching your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.
- If you do get sick, stay home and complete the COVID-19 online assessment tool at [www.ahs.ca/covid](http://www.ahs.ca/covid) to see if you should be tested.

#### **I'm feeling sick and think I may have COVID-19. What should I do?**

If you are feeling sick, stay home and complete the COVID-19 online assessment tool at [www.ahs.ca](http://www.ahs.ca) to see if you should be tested.

COVID-19 testing is available to anyone who:

- Has symptoms of COVID-19
- Is a close contact of a confirmed case, whether symptomatic or not
- Is linked to a known outbreak\*, whether symptomatic or not

***\*As there is a COVID-19 outbreak at the Olymel plant, all staff, who have not previously tested positive, are eligible for testing. All staff and their families are encouraged to get tested, whether they have symptoms of COVID-19 or not.***

#### **I have symptoms of COVID-19. What do I do?**

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should isolate and be tested.

- Do not attend work, school, social events, or any other public gatherings.
- Don't share personal items like dishes, utensils, or towels with family members.
- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid close contact with other people, especially those with chronic conditions, a compromised immune system, or seniors (over 65 years of age).
- Please do not visit a hospital, physician's office, lab or healthcare facility without consulting your doctor or Health Link (call 811) first.
  - For a medical emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department. Inform them that you may have COVID-19.
- Stay home for a minimum of 10 days with any cold or flu symptoms until feeling well. You can leave your home for COVID-19 testing.
- If symptoms continue past 10 days, isolation should as well.
- Please visit [www.ahs.ca/covid](http://www.ahs.ca/covid) for the complete guidelines on isolation and quarantine.
- COVID-19 self-care instructions and how to manage symptoms of COVID19 at home can be found at [www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca](http://www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca)

#### **What/who is a close contact?**

A close contact is anyone who was in close contact with a COVID-19 case during the infectious period, which is the time that you can spread COVID-19 to others.

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

Close contacts therefore include those who:

- lived with or was within two metres of a person who has COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more (i.e. multiple interactions for a total of 15 minutes or more, even if a mask was worn during that contact)
- has had direct contact with bodily fluids of a person who has COVID-19 (i.e., was coughed or sneezed on)
- provided direct care for a person who has COVID-19,
- has physical contact with a person who has COVID-19, such as handshake, hugging, kissing, or sexual activity
- shares items with a person who has COVID-19 such as drinks, personal hygiene items, cigarettes, lipstick, eating utensils, etc.

Anyone who falls into any of the above categories is considered a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19.

When we have a household where there is a confirmed case, all the people in that household are considered “close contacts”, in that they would have been exposed to the COVID-19-positive person.

Wearing a non-medical mask is not sufficient to exempt you from being considered a close contact.

#### **What does isolation and quarantine mean?**

Isolation and quarantine help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by reducing contact with others. Both require staying home and avoiding situations where the virus could spread and infect other people. This means all situations where you may come in contact with

others, such as social gatherings, work, school, child care, athletic events, university, faith-based gatherings, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls, and all public gatherings.

- You should, (where possible) not use public transportation including buses, taxis, or ride sharing.
- As much as possible, you should limit contact with people.
- You should avoid having visitors to your home, but it is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food on the doorstep.
- You can also use delivery services for errands such as grocery shopping.
- Avoid sharing household items such as dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, pillows, or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water, place in the dishwasher for cleaning, or wash in the washing machine.

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

- Wash your hands often with soap and water and regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched and shared surfaces such as doorknobs and counters.
- If you need to leave your home for essential medical care or testing wear a mask while you are out.
- During isolation, it is important that you monitor your health for symptoms like fever or cough. If you develop symptoms, you can complete the online assessment tool for additional advice or call Health Link at 811.

### Testing information specific to the Olymel COVID-19 outbreak

#### **Should I be tested for COVID-19? What about my family?**

All Olymel staff, who have not previously tested positive, are encouraged to be tested for COVID-19 at this time. Family members, including children, should also be tested.

Testing is by appointment at designated testing sites in the community.

Alberta Health Services is contacting staff and families to arrange for testing, and to follow up on test results. You can also book a test online at:

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>

If using the Internet is not an option, you can call Health Link at 811 to book an appointment.

#### **Where can I be tested for COVID-19?**

Together with Olymel, Alberta Health Services has arranged for a mobile testing unit to be set up at the Olymel plant for staff and families to access. Those contacted by phone by Alberta Health Services Public Health will be offered this location. You can request an appointment at another testing site if you wish.

If booking an appointment online, you can select the Olymel testing site, or the Alberta Health Services' external assessment centre in Red Deer. Both sites will complete the same testing and results will be reported to you in the same timeframe.

***If you book an appointment online or by calling Health Link (811) please tell staff that you are an employee or (family member of an employee) of Olymel.*** This will aid in the tracking of test results and case numbers as part of the outbreak management. Such information is valuable in helping protect staff, families and the community from illness spread. It will also help in planning for a safe return to work.

You will be given the choice of a date and time for your testing appointment. Please make every effort to attend your appointment. If you are unable to make it, please contact Alberta Health Services to reschedule.

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

#### **Is testing only by appointment?**

Testing is currently offered by Alberta Health Services in Red Deer by appointment only.

Effective February 25, 2021 the mobile testing provider will begin providing walk-in testing. No appointment will be necessary. This walk-in testing option will be only for Olymel staff and their family members; it is not available to the general public.

#### **I don't drive/have access to a vehicle. How can I get to the testing site?**

If you do not have a vehicle or do not drive, you can safely travel to the testing site by taking the following precautions:

- If you use public transit (like a city bus) please ensure you practice physical distancing and wear a mask or face covering that covers the mouth, nose and chin.
- If you use a cab or taxi, sit in the back seat and wear a mask or face covering before entering the vehicle, for the duration of the trip, and when exiting the vehicle.
- If a friend is driving you, the driver should wear a mask and eye protection, where possible. You must also wear a mask or face covering before and during the trip. Sit in the backseat if possible.

If you live in the same home, you can travel in the same car.

#### **How often should I be tested?**

Testing of staff and families, who have not previously tested positive, is recommended every five days, whether you have symptoms or not. This helps Alberta Health Services, as well as Olymel, better monitor for illness spread.

This data will help ensure staff and their families have the supports they need, and be used in planning for a safe re-opening of the plant.

#### **If I am feeling sick or have COVID-19 symptoms, can I still be tested?**

Yes. If you or a family member has COVID-19 symptoms, you are allowed to leave your home to come for testing.

#### **If I test positive, will I or my family be in trouble?**

No. There is no punishment or discipline for testing positive for COVID-19. Everyone is susceptible to this illness and it is no one's fault if they become ill.

#### **Will I lose my job if I get COVID-19?**

Some people think if they are sick they shouldn't tell anyone, because they might lose their job. You will not be fired for having COVID-19.

You must, however, isolate if you have COVID-19 or are a close contact of a positive case.

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

#### **I previously tested positive for COVID-19. Should I be tested again?**

At this time, Alberta Health Services does not recommend that anyone who tested positive be tested again. This is because very low levels of the virus can be detected in people for up to three months, or 90 days, after they have had COVID-19.

These low levels of the virus are not enough to transmit to other people once the infectious period has passed.

Family members of anyone who previously tested positive but who did not test positive themselves should be re-tested.

#### **How will I get my test results?**

MyHealth Records is the fastest way to receive test results for Albertans 14 years or older. You can sign up at [myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords) or see your family doctor to receive your results. Parents will also be able to consent to receive automated test results for children.

Positive and Negative results can be provided by SMS text 24/7 **or** automated telephone message from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. depending on how you consented to receive your results. Results are not available at any testing facility.

You will always be contacted directly by Alberta Health Services' Public Health team if your results are positive for the purpose of contact tracing and providing additional health information.

Each test result is delivered by a dedicated call or text. This could mean multiple calls or texts are delivered to a single number provided for a family.

#### **If my test result is negative does that mean I am safe?**

A negative result does not mean you will not get COVID-19. A negative result means you do not currently have the virus. If you have a negative result, it is recommended that you test again 5 days after your last test.

If your test is negative but you have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 you must still quarantine for 14 days from your last contact with them. If you have been identified as a close contact, AHS will notify you directly. However, if we are unable to reach you, please note the quarantine requirement. Visit [ahs.ca/results](https://ahs.ca/results) for more information.

#### **How will I know it is Alberta Health Services calling?**

When Alberta Health Services staff call, whether to book appointments, provide test results or additional health information if you are required to isolate, the number will be

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

displayed as *AB HEALTH SRVCS*. Alberta Health Services will never call and ask for credit card information, or charge a fee for COVID-19 testing, or results.

As Public Health team members supporting the outbreak response work in different locations, calls may occasionally show up as *Unknown Number* or *Restricted*. Please do not ignore these calls to ensure you connect with healthcare staff.

#### **What information will Alberta Health Services be looking for?**

If you are positive for COVID-19, Alberta Health Services staff will follow up to discuss your symptoms, isolation requirements and ways to protect others while you are ill.

Staff will also work to identify anyone you have been in contact with to ensure that anyone who is determined to be a close contact can be notified and advised of the need to isolate and receive testing. This is called contact tracing and is an important part of helping prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It's important to be truthful with contact tracers. They cannot help if they don't have all the information.

## Isolation information specific to the Olymel COVID-19 outbreak

#### **Do I have to stay home if I have COVID-19?**

If you have COVID-19, you are legally required to isolate. If asked to isolate or quarantine, this means staying in one location, at one address. Moving around to different homes or locations is not allowed and is illegal.

You must also not work at any other job if you have COVID-19. **Stay home – do not leave your home** or attend work, school, social events, religious events or any other public gatherings.

- Avoid close contact with people in your household, especially seniors and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems. Do not share a bed with anyone.
- You must not let visitors in who don't live in your house, even if they are members of your extended family.
- You must not visit other people's houses.
- You are not allowed to take public transportation like buses, taxis or ride-share.
- Do not go outside for a walk through your neighborhood or park. This includes children in mandatory isolation.
- You can get fresh air in your backyard, if you have one, but you must remain on private property not accessible by others.
- If you live in an apartment building or high-rise, you must stay inside and cannot use the elevators or stairwells to go outside. If your balcony is private and at least

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

2 metres away from your closest neighbors, you may go outside by yourself on the balcony.

You can visit [www.ahs.ca/isolation](http://www.ahs.ca/isolation) for more information on isolation requirements and supports available including access to isolation/quarantine hotels.

#### **If I am isolating and experience a medical emergency, can I leave my house?**

If you have COVID-19 and are having a medical emergency, go straight to an emergency department, or call 911.

Inform 911 or hospital staff at the emergency department of your symptoms. This ensures that you will get the care you need without putting others at risk.

You will still receive the emergency care you need; no one will be denied health services.

#### **If one family member has COVID-19 but others in the house do not, what should they do?**

If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the household, all other members of the household should isolate for 14 days from the day when the case's symptoms showed. This will help prevent the spread of the infection.

If another member of the household tests positive, the 14 days of isolation starts again for the whole household.

If people are having difficulty isolating because of a large household there is support available. There are hotel rooms available for you to isolate. Please call 211.

The government of Alberta offers a token amount to all individuals that have completed their isolation in one of the Iso-hotels.

#### **Is it okay to be walking around in the community?**

Individuals who are **confirmed cases of COVID-19**, or who are required to be on isolation, **are not allowed to leave their own property**. If you do not have COVID-19 and are not required to isolate, you can walk around in the community.

#### **Do close contacts need to isolate?**

Close contacts of people with positive test results also have to isolate. In one household, this would mean that all family members of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the same house would be required to isolate for 14 days, and monitor to see if they develop symptoms.

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

### Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

#### **Do my kids need to stay home if they are a close contact?**

A child who is a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case will need to be home for 14 days.

#### **Can I go to work if I have COVID-19? What if I am a close contact?**

No. You are legally required to isolate if you have COVID-19. Do not work at any job that you may have, regardless of who the employer is, until your isolation period is over.

If you go to work when you are sick, you can spread the disease to others. The best way to stop the virus from spreading is to stay home when you are sick.

Close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case must also isolate and not work for a period of 14 days. If a close contact develops symptoms, they must continue to isolate.

#### **If I am a confirmed close contact but have tested negative and have no symptoms, do I need to isolate?**

Yes, you must continue to isolate until 14 days after the last exposure to the case, even if you have tested negative.

#### **My loved one who I live with, has COVID-19. How can I take care of them and not get sick myself?**

- If at all possible, try to ensure that the ill person has a designated bedroom and bathroom.
- Maintain physical distance from the ill individual, as much as possible.
- Visitors should not come to the home.
- Do not allow the ill person to prepare meals for others, and ensure that the ill person uses separate preparation area or at least prepares meals at a different time, washing all surfaces after.
- Avoid sharing household items like dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels and pillows.
- Wash your hands frequently, with soap and warm water.
- Frequently sanitize all surfaces, particular hand rails, door knobs, sink taps, toilets, and other items of frequent touching.
- Advise loved one to cover their coughs and sneezes with their arm, not their hand, and to practice good respiratory etiquette at all times.
- Monitor yourself for symptoms and call Health Link at 811 or call your doctor for assessment and advice if you have symptoms yourself.

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Olymel outbreak

Frequently Asked Questions for staff & families

---

### Outbreak supports available for Olymel staff and families

Isolation can have major implications on people's lives and we understand that people are stressed – emotionally, mentally and financially. This is a difficult time for many and sometimes this leads to high emotions.

But we are here to help.

Olymel, Alberta Health Services, United Food and Commercial Workers Canada Union (Local No. 401), the City of Red Deer and the Red Deer Primary Care Network are working together to support staff and their families who are impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak at the Olymel plant.

#### **Is there somewhere I can go to isolate if I can't do so safely in my home?**

Hotel rooms are available in Red Deer for people who must isolate but cannot do so in their current homes. The Red Deer Primary Care Network is reaching out to Olymel employees to provide information on isolation assistance. You may also call 211.

#### **I don't have a family doctor. How can I access a doctor if I need help?**

The Red Deer Primary Care Network has a team of family doctors who are available to assist COVID-19-positive individuals and their families if anyone is without a regular family doctor at this time.

#### **Are there financial supports available for those who must isolate?**

Government financial aid plans may be available for those that are unable to come to work due to isolation that do not have access to paid leave or other income support. The Government of Alberta is also offering a token for those that have completed isolation at any of the designated Isolation hotels.

#### **I must take time off work to care for a child or dependant family member. Is there financial aid available to me? Will I lose my job?**

In October, the Government of Canada announced changes to financial aid, including a new sick leave benefit and a new caregiver benefit for those forced to take time off work to care for a dependent because of COVID-19.

Changes have been made to the Employment Standards Code in Alberta, ensuring that both full and part-time employees are allowed to take 14 days of job-protected leave if they are required to isolate or caring for a child or dependent adult that is required to isolate.

Under the revised code, employees ARE NOT required to have a medical note and do not need to have worked for an employer for 90 days, to be eligible.